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**UNITED KINGDOM 2013**

## **DECLARATION ON PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT**

*Adopted in London on 11 April 2013*

1. Ministers welcomed the positive efforts in recent years by States, the UN, other intergovernmental organisations, local and international civil society and nongovernmental organisations to prevent and respond to sexual violence in armed conflict. Despite these efforts, sexual violence in armed conflict continues to occur. In some conflicts it is systematic or widespread, reaching appalling levels of brutality. Ministers recognised that parties to armed conflict bear the primary responsibility to take all feasible steps to ensure the protection of civilians but, as Ministers noted in Washington in April 2012, the G8 has an important role in promoting conflict prevention and resolution, including through advancing the implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security and on Children and Armed Conflict. Sexual violence in armed conflict represents one of the most serious forms of violation or abuse of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Preventing sexual violence in armed conflict is therefore both a matter of upholding universal human rights and of maintaining international security, in keeping with UN Security Council Resolution 1820. Ministers emphasised that more must be done to address these ongoing crimes, including by challenging the myths that sexual violence in armed conflict is a cultural phenomenon or an inevitable consequence of war or a lesser crime.

2. Ministers recognised the positive steps in holding perpetrators to account at both the national and international level including through the work of the International Criminal Court, the ad hoc and mixed tribunals, and the specialised chambers in national tribunals. But in conflict and post-conflict situations national justice systems are significantly weakened resulting in a limited number of perpetrators facing justice. Ministers recalled that international humanitarian law maintains a long-standing prohibition of sexual violence in armed conflict and that sexual violence when it is part of a widespread or systematic attack against a civilian population can constitute a crime against humanity and can be a constitutive act with respect to genocide. They also recalled the existing normative frameworks established under UN Security Council Resolutions 1261 (1999), 1325 (2000) and 1612 (2005) and all subsequent resolutions on children in armed conflict and on women, peace and security, as well as UN Security Council Resolution 1983 (2011). Ministers expressed their full support for the work of the UN in addressing sexual violence in armed conflict, particularly that of UN Women, and for the mandates of the UN Secretary-General's Special Representatives on Children and Armed Conflict and Sexual Violence in Conflict. They welcomed, in particular, the work of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict to build coherence and coordination in the UN's response to sexual violence in armed conflict through UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict as well as her focus on national ownership and responsibility.



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3. Ministers reiterated that promoting and protecting women's and children's full human rights and fundamental freedoms is critical in the fight to end all forms of sexual violence committed in conflict. Efforts to end sexual violence in conflict must also promote women's active and equal political, social and economic participation including in all conflict prevention, conflict resolution, transitional justice and security sector reform processes. Ministers underlined the importance of responding to the needs of men and boys who are victims of sexual violence in armed conflict, as well as to the needs of those secondarily traumatized as forced witnesses of sexual violence against family members. Ministers also emphasised the importance of engaging men and boys as partners in efforts to prevent and eliminate gender-based violence, including sexual violence in armed conflict, and to end the stigmatisation of victims by encouraging a change in attitudes and behaviours through promoting equality between men and women.

4. Ministers recalled that rape and other forms of serious sexual violence in armed conflict are war crimes and also constitute grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions and their first Protocol. States have an obligation to search for and prosecute (or hand over for trial) any individual alleged to have committed or ordered a grave breach regardless of nationality. Accordingly, those accused of grave breaches should be brought to trial, in a manner consistent with international norms. There should be no safe haven for perpetrators of sexual violence in armed conflict.

5. Ministers recognised that further action at the international level is imperative to end sexual violence in armed conflict, to tackle the lack of accountability that exists for these crimes and to provide comprehensive support services to victims, be they women, girls, men or boys. Ministers undertook to work together and with others in a concerted and comprehensive campaign to raise awareness of these crimes, to strengthen international political will at the very highest levels to remove the barriers that prevent the effective monitoring and reporting on situations of sexual violence in armed conflict, to provide better support to victims, and to build both national and international capacities to respond to sexual violence in armed conflict including through investigating the crimes and prosecuting the offenders. In this regard, Ministers committed, within the parameters of their respective national programmes and priorities, to taking the actions outlined in the following paragraphs.

6. Ministers recognised that the effective investigation and documentation of sexual violence in armed conflict is instrumental both in bringing perpetrators to justice and ensuring access to justice for victims whilst protecting their safety, dignity and human rights. A common approach to the investigation and documentation of sexual violence in armed conflict by different responders that conforms to applicable international law would ensure that multiple actor efforts do not overlap or weaken or destroy evidence or information and



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that due consideration is given to support for victims throughout the documentation and investigative processes. Recognising the need for standard guidelines, Ministers welcomed the aims of the proposed International Protocol on the Investigation and Documentation of sexual violence in conflict and endorsed its development.

7. In defending and promoting women's and children's rights and confronting sexual violence in armed conflict, women's civil society organisations and networks, in particular women human rights defenders play a particularly important role in monitoring, fact-finding and documenting cases of sexual violence and empowering victims to pursue judicial and other remedies. They can also strengthen frontline protection, service provision and access to justice for such victims. Ministers recognised the need to afford better protection to human rights defenders and committed to support conflict-affected countries develop and implement country-level action plans with the involvement of local organisations to provide such protection. Ministers also agreed to enhance the coordination of their protection efforts in countries of concern, drawing, as appropriate, on existing guidelines such as those developed by the EU, for the protection and support of human rights defenders where applicable.

8. The provision of appropriate and accessible services, including health, psychosocial, legal and economic support is essential to support the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of sexual violence in armed conflict and to empower them to pursue justice. This is particularly important for child victims, who can often be excluded from adult-centric programming. Ministers emphasised that all forms of humanitarian support must remain impartial and be consistent with the principle of "do no harm" and in accordance with the UN's Inter Agency Standing Committee Guidelines for Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings, the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action and the UN guiding principles of humanitarian assistance. Ministers stressed the importance of ensuring that a comprehensive response is included and appropriately funded in conflict, humanitarian, broader development and global health programming. Ministers emphasised the need for further funding support for victims and called on the international community, including the G8, to increase their efforts to mobilise such funding, including to programmes such as the ICC Trust Fund for Victims and its implementing partners.

9. Ministers stressed the importance of further funding for prevention and response efforts and called on the international community, including the G8, to mobilise such funding from the first phase of conflict and humanitarian emergencies. Ministers also agreed to contribute to building the evidence base on the effective ways to prevent and respond to sexual violence in armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies. Ministers also agreed to support UN reform efforts aimed at ensuring that UN agencies and their partners meet agreed standards on gender-based violence in humanitarian settings.



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10. Ministers stressed that peace and security efforts, including in humanitarian settings and post-conflict transition and reform processes, should include provisions to prevent and respond to sexual violence in armed conflict, including by holding perpetrators to account and by providing justice and redress to victims. Ministers agreed that peace negotiations and ceasefires which are supported by G8 members should include the participation of women and explicit recognition of the need to prevent, address and reduce crimes of sexual violence in armed conflict. Ministers further stressed the need to exclude crimes of sexual violence in armed conflict from amnesty provisions. Ministers undertook to promote women's involvement in all peace negotiations, peacebuilding, prevention, and accountability efforts and to ensure that such efforts also take the needs and rights of women and children into consideration. In this regard, Ministers committed to assisting conflict-affected countries in ensuring that their future national security sector and justice reform programmes are gender and child-sensitive and that they are designed to address and reduce gender-based violence, including sexual violence, and promote the full participation of women. Ministers recognised the need to promote national institutions and legal reforms that address and deter sexual violence; including through support to both state and non-state service providers where appropriate. They committed to supporting the deployment of international experts in situations of particular concern with respect to sexual violence in conflict at the request of host governments, the UN and international organisations to build national judicial, criminal investigative and legal capacity to increase the number of perpetrators brought to justice.

11. Ministers recognised that efforts to address sexual violence in armed conflict should be consistent with and support wider efforts to promote better implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security. Ministers recognised the important contribution of National Action Plans to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, undertook to regularly review such Plans and committed to providing support to conflict-affected countries in the development of their Plans.

12. Ministers agreed that Governments should review the doctrine and training provided to their national military and police where appropriate to ensure that it includes training for appropriate personnel deployed to relevant theatres on the implications of rape and other forms of sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations. This should include, where appropriate, the training and support provided to the forces of other states. Ministers also support UN and other multilateral efforts to ensure such training is provided to international peacekeeping forces. In recognition of their particular contribution to the fight against sexual violence, Ministers called for the deployment of Women and Child Protection Advisers within appropriate UN and other peacekeeping operations and missions. In this regard Ministers stressed the importance of ensuring that such Women and



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Child Protection Advisers are appropriately trained and, where deployed by UN Peacekeeping missions are included on the central budgets of these missions.

13. Ministers recognised that a cooperative approach to addressing sexual violence in armed conflict, which is often not considered a priority in the face of other pressing security and conflict concerns would clearly have greater impact. Greater coordination, particularly in support of the work of the UN and other relevant multilateral organisations, is vital to improving global efforts to meet the challenge. Ministers reaffirmed their support for the mandate of the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, including their advocacy efforts with governments and other parties to armed conflict to make and implement specific and time-bound commitments to combat sexual violence, and the development and distribution of relevant tools and resources, including by other competent authorities. Ministers also affirmed their support for the work of the Team of Experts-Rule of Law / Sexual Violence in Conflict as mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 1888.

14. Ministers recognised the need to strengthen UN efforts to address sexual violence in armed conflict and committed to provide further support to the Special Representative as chair of UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict as well as to the Secretary-General's Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict to assist in the implementation of her mandate to address sexual violence against children in armed conflict.

15. Ministers recognised the need for a continued focus on this issue and for a considered review of the implementation of the above commitments.